

HOUSE BILL NO. 740

INTRODUCED BY HEINERT, CURTISS, MAEDJE

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT CREATING THE ASBESTOS DISEASE ACCOUNT IN THE STATE SPECIAL REVENUE FUND TO BE USED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES FOR GRANTS TO THE LINCOLN COUNTY HEALTH BOARD FOR ASBESTOS-RELATED DISEASE PROGRAMS; APPROPRIATING MONEY FOR THE PROGRAMS; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

WHEREAS, hundreds of residents of Lincoln County, Montana, have been diagnosed with chronic asbestos-related diseases due to exposure to vermiculite from the Zonolite Mountain mine that was contaminated with tremolite asbestos, and this number continues to rise as more individuals are diagnosed; and

WHEREAS, these individuals, and many more, either now or in the future will need assistance both with paying medical expenses that are not covered by insurance and in meeting their own basic human needs due to the debilitating nature of asbestos-related diseases; and

WHEREAS, by providing case management and personal care assistance, many of these individuals will better utilize federal and private health care and social programs and be able to remain in their homes, creating savings to the state and county; and

WHEREAS, these individuals suffer from asbestos-related negative health impacts through no fault of their own; and

WHEREAS, there is still no permanent source of funding for medical and psychosocial care for Lincoln County asbestos patients, as the medical plan currently funded by W.R. Grace is voluntary and unregulated and federal grant funding that is currently paying for asbestos patient services is unlikely to be renewed; and

WHEREAS, there is currently no cure for either asbestosis or mesothelioma, and it is likely that autoimmune diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, will be found to be linked to tremolite asbestos exposure, and there is no cure for these diseases either; and

WHEREAS, the unmet medical and social needs of asbestos patients in Lincoln County are disproportionate to the community's size and ability to meet these needs from county funds.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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2 **NEW SECTION. Section 1. Asbestos disease account.** There is an asbestos disease account in the
3 state special revenue fund to be used by the department for grants to the Lincoln County health board to be used
4 for the following purposes:

5 (1) providing case management services for asbestos patients;

6 (2) maintaining and overseeing a working network of Lincoln County health care and social service
7 providers;

8 (3) providing direct services to individuals who have a positive result as determined by a qualified
9 physician for asbestos-related diseases;

10 (4) evaluating the programs for effectiveness and quality; and

11 (5) pursuing both short-term and permanent funding for health care and social service needs of
12 asbestos patients.

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14 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Fund transfer -- appropriation.** There is transferred \$175,000 from the
15 general fund to the asbestos disease account provided for in [section 1]. The money in the account is
16 appropriated to the department of public health and human services for the 2007 biennium to be used for grants
17 to the Lincoln County health board for the purposes stated in [section 1].

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19 **NEW SECTION. Section 3. Codification instruction.** [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an
20 integral part of Title 50, chapter 1, part 1, and the provisions of Title 50, chapter 1, part 1, apply to [section 1].

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22 **NEW SECTION. Section 4. Effective date.** [This act] is effective July 1, 2005.

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